

THE "DO'S" AND "DON'TS" OF BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP

Developing a trusting, positive and reciprocal relationship is hard work. The following "tips" are certain to ease the process...

BE CONSISTENT: If a child has suffered multiple disappointments, this can be the most crucial quality that you can offer. Consistency is a **key factor** in building trust.

MODEL APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR: Be conscious of your own behavior and the self-image you are projecting. Your Little will most certainly be watching and learning.

SPEND ONE-ON-ONE TIME: The Big Sister Big Brother Program is primarily a one-to-one service. Shared time between a Big and Little may be the only time when the child is not one of several siblings, or surrounded by a roomful of students.

LISTEN: In your eagerness to relate to children, resist the impulse to interrupt with a similar story of your own. Listen actively, with your full attention.

REMEMBER DETAILS: Nothing is more flattering than to know that you are truly being listened to and that what you have to say is worth remembering.

LEARN 20 FAST FACTS: In the course of your first couple of outings, without prying, find out 20 facts about people, places and things that are important to your Little. Who is their teacher? Who's their favorite band/singer? What's their favorite food?

SHOW AFFECTION: Children naturally want and need affection. Always keep in mind the importance of modeling appropriate behavior. You can show affection by letting the child know that you've been thinking about them during their absence.

GIVE ENCOURAGEMENT: Remind your Little of previous successes when something seems difficult or insurmountable. Tell them, "You can do it."

ACKNOWLEDGE ACCOMPLISHMENTS: In day to day activities, acknowledge when your Little tries and succeeds. i.e. correctly spells a word, does a cartwheel, helps an older person open the door, etc...

BE FLEXIBLE: Relationships are about give and take. Learn to compromise; do it the Little's way once and your way the next, i.e. lunch first and video arcade after, museum this time and movie next time.

RESPECT BOUNDARIES: Be aware of your Littles' physical and emotional "comfort zones". If you see that a question you've asked is "touchy," back away. Children who have been hurt before need to protect their vulnerability.

PRACTICE EMPATHY: Although you may not have suffered the degree of loss that your Little has, reach down and remember how you felt about the losses you have had, i.e. loss of a beloved pet, a grandparent's death, divorce, etc...

BE CLEAR AND UP FRONT: If your Little is behaving inappropriately (swearing, etc...), address the specific behavior in a clear and direct manner. It is your responsibility to help educate your Little, in a caring way, about appropriate social behavior.

GIVE REASONS: You increase your credibility if you can say **why** something is or isn't appropriate. Littles benefit tremendously from learning the reasons behind the decisions that Bigs make.

SEE THE YOUTH AS AN INDIVIDUAL: Identify what is special and unique about your Little and acknowledge it. Forming a personal identity is a very important part of growing up; Bigs' acceptance and support during this time is crucial.

KEEP IN MIND WHILE BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP

DO NOT:

DO NOT criticize your Little's family: Even if you disapprove, do not voice your opinion. Consult Match Support Specialist with any concerns. Help your Little constructively problem-solve issues involving his/her concerns about the family.

DO NOT criticize your Little's friends: Likewise, do not voice your opinion about behavior or "style" of your Little's friends. Friends are important people in your Little's life.

DO NOT constantly teach: Recognize "**teachable moments**" using approaches such as, "What do you think of the way that person just behaved?" Be a guide while helping your Little discover his/her own answers. Make certain that teaching is only one component of the complex mentoring relationship.

DO NOT share your personal problems: While it is truly valuable to share your thoughts and experiences with your Little, remember that you are there for the child. Only when there is a lesson to be learned is it appropriate to share personal problems with your Little.

DO NOT set unrealistic expectations: Understand that you are one force among many in your Little's life; be patient and persevering. Be aware of, and celebrate, the small changes and successes.

DO NOT generalize negative behavior: For example, avoid words like "you always" and "you never."

DO NOT dwell on the past: Avoid bringing up past mistakes – "Well, you were late last time so I figured you would be late again."

DO NOT punish honesty: Even if you do not approve of reported behavior perceptions, don't let your disapproval become punishment to your Little for telling you about what is happening or how they are feeling.

DO NOT pry: Be sensitive to verbal and nonverbal cues that indicate you are asking too many or too threatening questions.

DO NOT use a lot of "shoulds": "Shoulds" imply judgement and provoke resistance. Find ways to say "how about if..." and other more positive phrases.

DO NOT discourage difference: Allow your Little the freedom to explore various ways of thinking and behaving even if it's different from yours.

DO NOT pass judgments: Wait to be asked before you offer your opinion.

DO NOT worry excessively about doing the wrong thing: Just be yourself. Use sound judgment and common sense. Remember that we all make mistakes; turning mistakes into "teachable moments" is the key.



STAGES OF THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

There are some **common stages** that most friendships will go through at different times, usually depending on the level of trust that has been established.

The Honeymoon Stage – From the first meeting to approximately 4 months.

What does this stage look like?

- You both are trying to figure each other out.
- Littles may try to get their Big's approval or impress them.

What can you do to move it along?

- Without prying, learn facts about your Little and reference them in conversation. i.e. favorite things, best friend, where they have traveled.
- Be consistent and flexible: do what you said you were going to do.

A common phenomenon in early match development is the expectation that we are going to immediately impact our little's life.

For example:

- Our Littles' grades jumped from F to A!
- Our Littles' became perfect kids!
- Our Littles' trusted us completely!
- Our Littles' showed sincere appreciation!
- Our Littles' realized how much investment of ourselves we had in their life!

Beware of the trap of placing expectations on yourself and your Little, this often sets you up for disappointment and you become burntout. Results may not be immediate and you may not see an impact for years to come. This is common but be aware that you are definitely making an impact on your Little!

Growth Phase - From the 4 month stage to one year.

What does this stage look like?

- This is the most crucial time regarding the development of the Big/Little relationship.
- This is the time that may be a turning point in this relationship.
- Your Little may begin testing you to see what you are really all about and how much he/she can get away with.
- Your Little may be observing you to find a reason not to trust you.



What can you do to move it along?

- Show your Little that he/she can trust you through your reliability, consistency and time together. As trust develops, he/she may begin to share bits of information here and there with you.
- Keep in close contact with your Match Support Specialist for ideas.
- Recognize and praise accomplishments.
- If you need to give advice or address behavior problems, give reasons and avoid "shoulds".

Maturity Phase - From one year onward.

What does this stage look like?

- You will notice your relationship with your Little has become more positive, realistic, and match activities are less structured.
- Most Bigs have shed their preconceived notions regarding the match and their Little.
- As the friendship matures, you will see the maturity of your Little as he/she grows and develops.

What can you do to move it along?

- Develop long term shared interests, activities that you will do frequently together and that you both enjoy.
- Identify past shared experiences and enjoyed shared jokes.
- Learn something new to both of you, together.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

"I" MESSAGES

- Help explain your feelings in response to someone else's behavior.
- Do not accuse or place blame - avoiding judgment and keeping communication open.
- Continue to advance a situation to a problem solving stage.

For example:

"I was really sad when you didn't show up for our meeting last week. I look forward to our meetings and was disappointed not to see you. In the future, I would appreciate it if you could call me and let me know if you will not be able to make it."

Avoid:

"You didn't show up and I waited for one hour. You could have at least called me and let me know that you wouldn't be there. You are irresponsible."



Watch the message that you are giving:

- **Body language:** slouching, turning away, and pointing a finger
- **Timing:** speaking too fast or too slow
- **Tone of voice:** shouting, whispering, sneering, and whining
- **Choice of words:** biting, accusative, pretentious, and emotionally charged
- **Facial expression:** smiling, squirming, raising eyebrows, and gritting teeth

Results:

"I" messages present only perspective allowing the other person to actually "have" a point of view. "I" messages communicate both information and respect for each position moving both parties along to the problem solving stage.

Paraphrase

- Listen first, then reflect the two parts of the speaker's message, **FACT** and **FEELING**, back to the speaker.
- Listen "between the lines" for the "feeling" part of the communication.
- Allow you to "check out" what you heard for accuracy – did you interpret what your Little said correctly?
- Helpful when working with youth culture/language that is constantly changing. Often words have an entirely different meaning for youth today.

Format:

Examples for FACT

"So you're saying that..."

"You believe that..."

"The problem is..."

Examples for FEELING

"You feel that..."

"Your reaction is..."

"And that made you feel..."



Paraphrases are not a time to respond by evaluating, sympathizing, giving our opinion, offering advice, analyzing or

Results:

- Enables you to gather the information and report back the facts and the attitudes/feelings that were expressed in the message.
- Lets the other person know that you understand and care about his/her thoughts and feelings.

Open Ended Questions

- Collect information by exploring feelings, attitudes and how the other person views a situation.
- Maintain an active dialog without interrogating by asking questions which cannot be answered with a "yes", "no", "I don't know", or a grunt.
- Helpful when dealing with youth, teenagers especially, whom tend to answer questions with the least amount of words as possible.

Examples:

"How do you see this situation?"

"How did you decide that?"

"What are your reasons for...?"

"What would you like to do about it?"

"Can you give me an example?"

"What part did you play?"

"How does this affect you?"

Caution: Using the question, "Why did you do that?" may sometimes yield a defensive response rather than a clarifying response.

Results:

Since open-ended questions require a bit more time than closed ended questions (questions that can be answered by "yes", "no", or a brief phrase), they give the person a chance to explain. Open-ended questions yield significant information, which can in turn be used to problem solve.

LISTENING SKILLS

Relationships are built from a foundation of effective listening skills and good overall communication. These skills are based on respect, honesty and responsibility. With children, we have the obligation to listen, and to understand their level of communication.

ACTIVE LISTENING

- Attempt to understand the content and emotion of what the other person is saying.
- Pay attention to verbal and non-verbal messages.
- Focus, hear, respect, and communicate your desire to understand.
- **Not** the time to be planning or delivering your own message as to how you feel.

Active listening is **NOT**: nagging, cajoling, reminding, threatening, criticizing, questioning, advising, evaluating, probing, judging or ridiculing.

What skills are used?

- Eye contact
- Body language: open and relaxed posture, forward lean, appropriate facial expressions, positive use of gestures.
- Verbal cues such as "um-hmmm", "sure", "ah", "yes", etc...

What are the results of active listening?

- Encourages honesty
- Frees people of troublesome feelings by allowing for open expression
- Reduces fear - helps people become less afraid of negative feelings
- Builds respect and affection
- Increases acceptance - promotes a feeling of understanding
- The first step towards problem solving- "negotiating from the heart"

When you actively listen, you cooperate in solving the problem and in preventing future problems.

Problem Solving

Remember no one, even children, wants you to solve their problems for them. People share problems in order to process their feelings regarding the situation – not for you to advise them on what to do. To support your Little in his/her problem solving process, ask some of the following questions:

- "What's the worst that could happen if..."
- "How bad would it be if..."
- "What would that mean?"
- "Let's make a list of pros and cons."

"ROADBLOCKS" TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

The following, while not always bad to use, have a tendency to "close down" communication rather than "open up" communication, and should be avoided in conversations with Littles.

1. Ordering, Directing, Commanding

Telling the child to do something; giving the child an order or command.

"I don't care what other children are doing, you have to do the yard work!"

"Now you go back up there and play with Ginny and Joyce!"

"Stop complaining!"



2. Moralizing, Preaching, "Should's" and "Ought's"

Invoking vague, outside authority as accepted truth.

"You shouldn't act like that."

"Children are supposed to respect their elders."

3. Teaching, Lecturing, Giving logical argument

Trying to influence the child with facts, counter-arguments, logic, or your own opinion:

"Children must learn to get along with one another."

"Let's look at the facts about college graduates."

"When I was your age, I had twice as much to do as you."

4. Judging, Criticizing, Disagreeing, Blaming

Making a negative judgement or evaluation of the child.

"You're not thinking clearly."

"That's an immature point of view."

"You're very wrong about that."

"I couldn't disagree with you more."

5. Withdrawing, Distracting, Sarcasm, Humoring, Diverting

Trying to steer the child away from the problem. i.e. withdrawing from the problem yourself, distracting the child, pushing the problem aside, etc...

"Just forget it."

"Let's not talk about this at the table."

"Come on- let's talk about something more pleasant."

"We've all been through this before."



CREATING AND MAINTAINING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Boundary – a healthy space or a separation between individuals, both emotionally and physically. Setting boundaries shows your Little that you are concerned for their safety and well-being. Boundaries are necessary to allow a child to feel safe & secure in their relationships.

Keep in mind when setting boundaries:

- Know your role as a Big. Role clarification is essential in preventing any misunderstanding or inappropriate request on the part of a parent, child, or volunteer.
- Be aware of sharing personal information and how comfortable you are in discussing your personal life with your Little.
- Understand that you can say “I do not feel comfortable discussing this” to your Little whenever you feel it is appropriate and allow your Little to do so as well.
- Remember not to pass judgements on families and their different values. Voice your concerns to your Match Support Specialist regarding any of these issues.

CONSISTENCY IS KEY!!

- Consistent boundaries are a vital component of successful mentoring relationships.
- Words must support actions to give your Little the clearest possible signal about rules and boundaries.
- Your Little may decide to test the rules, but should be consistently reminded with both words and actions about these set boundaries.

Setting Appropriate Limits

By setting firm limits, Bigs help Littles create a relationship that is built upon respect.

Be sure to:

- Set clear rules and standards to promote responsibility in children.
- Praise positive behaviors rather than simply pointing out the negative ones.

This encourages the Little to learn from their Big and enhances their self esteem, allowing for a rewarding and warm relationship to grow.

Strategies for setting appropriate limits:

- Set realistic, age appropriate limits
- Continue to enforce limits consistently
- Always model appropriate behavior
- Be direct and specific
- Support your words with actions

MANAGING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Handling Difficult Behaviors

- **Showing Off** - Ignore the behavior unless the child can hurt himself or others. If so, remove them from the situation
- **Pushing to the limit** - Give no warning. When the misbehavior takes place immediately apply a consequence
- **Giving up easily** - Break up required tasks into shorter assignments. Reinforce them after every completion
- **Laziness** - Stop prodding, coaxing and threatening. Set up consequences
- **Dependency** - Help the child get started and then have them work on their own.
- **Shy** - Provide short frequent non-threatening ways for children to express themselves
- **Fearful** - Discuss the reasons for the fear and work on a plan to overcome it
- **Lying** - Ask follow-up questions to get more specific details

Delicate Topics:

Certain topics should be discussed only when initiated by the Little. These topics can be touchy and strongly affect the relationship. Feel free to seek support and feedback from your Match Support Specialist.

- Sex
- Peer Pressure
- Hygiene
- Behavior
- School Performance
- Personal Insecurities
- Stealing
- Identity Issues (Class, Culture, Sex)

Issues of Concern:

These may have lifelong implications for your Little so you need to report these your Match Support Specialist. They may be part of an ongoing problem so you should be aware of any issues in your Little's life

- Fighting at school
- Depression
- Delinquent behavior
- Gang affiliation
- Substance abuse
- Verbal harassment

Crises Requiring Intervention

These require direct and immediate intervention. Some issues such as abuse and neglect are mandated by law to be reported. You are not expected to handle these issues along, so please contact your Match Support Specialist AS SOON as you become aware of one of these situations.

- Child abuse and neglect
- Abusive relationships
- Chemical dependency
- Arrests
- Suicidal behavior
- Mental illness
- Physical harassment



CONFIDENCE BUILDING

For children to think positively of themselves, they must be thoroughly convinced that they are lovable, that they matter and have value simply because they exist. A crucial part of this is the quality of relationships that exist between children and those who play a significant role in their life. One of your most important roles as a mentor is to be your Little's cheerleader. Many of the children in our programs suffer from low self-esteem for various reasons. Below is some information about self-esteem and strategies for boosting their confidence!

Do:

- **Give responsibility**
 - Take the attitude that your Little is a responsible person.
- **Show appreciation for every positive action**
 - Show that you appreciate these efforts
- **Ask your Little for their opinions and suggestions**
 - Littles probably know things that you don't, especially in the areas of fashion, urban culture, and music. Show confidence in their judgment and you'll learn something!
- **Encourage participation in decision-making**
 - Show respect for your Little's opinions by getting them involved in making decisions about activities, classes, career choices etc...
- **Accept mistakes**
 - Without mistakes, there would be no learning. Mistakes can occur anywhere, and can be made by anyone. Don't overreact when they occur. Teach them that failures can be steppingstones to success.
- **Emphasize the process, not just the product**
 - Focus on the effort, progress or movement. Remember, it takes time to accomplish any goal; by encouraging efforts and progress, you can help increase self-confidence
- **Turn liabilities into assets**
 - Become an expert at scouting for positive potential. By focusing on the positive, you will provide a safe environment for youth in which they can openly discuss their fears and perceived shortcomings.
- **Have positive expectations**
 - If you expect the worst, chances are you'll get it. However, don't expect perfection. Instead, expect positive things and increasing effort.
- **Hold aspiration for your Little**
 - A simple statement like "I can't wait until you graduate high school in two years!" can show that you really do expect them to do well.

Don't

- Give speeches or lectures
- Argue or debate
- Ignore misbehavior
- Bribe or give rewards



PROMOTING YOUR LITTLE'S POSITIVE SELF-ESTEEM

Be Sure to...

- Voice your feelings or concerns
- Redirect inappropriate behavior
- Maintain open communication
- Point out positives

But Not to...

- Give speeches or lectures
- Ignore misbehavior
- Argue or debate
- Bribe or give rewards

INFORMATION ON SELF-ESTEEM

- Children grow and mature physically as well as emotionally.
- Their feelings about themselves encompass both the physical and emotional as they develop their **self-concept**.
- This development depends on the quality of relationships established between parents and children, and in other relationships with significant adults.
- To develop a positive and strong self-image, children must be thoroughly convinced that they are lovable, that they matter and are worthwhile, and that they can handle themselves and the environment with competence.
- **A word of caution:** there is a difference between being loved and feeling loved. Meeting a child's needs of feeling love is essential for their emotional well being.

What creates a sense of self-esteem?

- The quality of relationships that exist between children and those who play a significant role in their life.
- The psychological climate a parent, teacher, or Big creates for the child will determine the development of a healthy and positive self-image.
- Money, education, social class, parents' occupation, geography **are not** responsible for high self-esteem.

Steps in helping children build a strong sense of self:

- Emphasizing the positive things life offers, acknowledging day-to-day accomplishments, and offering sincere praise for work done.
- Telling the child what you like about them and their behavior. Do not be afraid of their getting a "big head". Children need this honest information.
- By offering friendship, providing positive reinforcement, listening and showing trust, you can help your Little gain confidence and self-worth.



SELF-ESTEEM: WHAT'S IN A DEFINITION?

Self-esteem is...

- Finding a work you love or developing a capacity to love your work.
- Developing an open mind and a tolerance of others.
- Understanding what makes people, including yourself, want to grow, to know and to be more.
- Knowing that you can always learn and maybe you can help others to learn.
- Working towards harmonious relationships with others.
- The desire to be as good as you can be and then get better.
- Knowing that if you take action toward a definite purpose, you will feel better.
- Wanting to be as healthy as you can be.
- Learning to dream and wake up knowing that, with persistence, all dreams are possible.
- Feeling compassionate for yourself and others.
- Being able to communicate with another person without either one of you feeling "put down."
- Learning how to eliminate fear from your emotional mind.
- Having the capacity to hope, faith to believe, and desire to share.



YOUTH CULTURE

Remember what it was like to be your Little's age? If you think about the following questions, you'll find that much of what you went through at that age, your Little is also going through:

- What was really important to you at the time?
- What was your father/mother like? Did you get along? Were you close?
- Think of your friends. Were friendships always easy or were they sometimes hard?
- In general, did you feel as though adults typically understood you well?

Many characteristics of adolescence are normal, common, developmental traits and consequently don't vary significantly from one generation to the next.

MODERN YOUTH CULTURE

Many adults believe that, in general, teenagers are exceedingly more rebellious than they themselves were as young people. Rebellion is a common, and perhaps necessary, ingredient in an adolescent's transition into adulthood.

How our society has changed..

- Alcohol and drug abuse is more prevalent today.
- Sexually Transmitted Infections are more common and more contagious.
- Crime and violence have dramatically increased throughout the country.
- Single-parent families have become more common while greater demands are being placed on all families.

Tips for success in relating to your Little

- ◆ **Take initiative: make your Little feel more comfortable in the relationship.**
You are the adult—you are the experienced one. Imagine what your Little might be thinking or feeling. When they come to you for help or advice they may already feel insecure about the problems in their lives.
- ◆ **Be yourself.**
Sometimes, with the best intentions, we try to "relate" to young people, using their slang to be like "one of the gang." Littles may find it difficult to trust people who are not true to themselves.
- ◆ **Do not over-identify with your Little.**
"I know exactly what you're feeling." Your Little realizes you will never know exactly what he/she is experiencing. He/she may actually feel invalidated by your insistence that you truly know where he/she is coming from.
- ◆ **Respect your differences.**
If something about your Little is bothering you, first determine whether the behavior is simply troubling to you because you would do it differently, or whether it is truly an indication of a more seriously troubled youth.
- ◆ **Model appropriate behavior.**
Littles will be watching and absorbing everything you do, so remember what you say and do may be duplicated by your Little in the future.
- ◆ **Identify and address situations on an individual basis.**
Don't generalize a person or their behavior as traits possessed by an entire social group.
- ◆ **Minimize the use of "slang" words.**
Especially out of anger, it reinforces stereotypes and directly influences prejudices.



SEXUALITY

SEXUAL ORIENTATION - an individual's physical and emotional arousal toward others.

- In the 1940's, Alfred Kinsey suggested that sexual orientation falls along a spectrum, including varying preferences between heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, and asexual orientation.

In adolescents, questioning and experimenting with one's sexual orientation are common behaviors.

- Trusting relationships with adults allow for the opportunity to discuss their feelings, especially if they are questioning their sexual identities.
- As a Big, be aware of the long, difficult process that is involved in an individual's sexual identity formation - particularly when that sexual identity is socially stigmatized. i.e. gay, lesbian, or bisexual orientations.

The Four Stages of Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Identity Formation:

1. Feelings of difference

A long process that sometimes begins with a vague sense of being different during childhood. Awareness of these feelings of difference may occur as early as 5-7 years old.

2. Identity Questioning

Beginning to wonder whether the feelings of difference are about their same-sex attractions. This stage can involve ambiguous, sexualized same-sex feelings and/or experimental activities. Stress and conflict often arise over the incongruity between the developing sense of self and the social stigmatization. This stage may last a long time, as these feelings occur and are often repressed.

3. Coming Out

Tolerance and later acceptance of identity often comes through contact with gay/lesbian individuals and culture, exploration of sexual possibilities and first sexual relationships. This person may begin careful, selective self-disclosure outside of the gay/lesbian community.

4. Pride

Integration of sexuality with the rest of one's self-concept. The capacity for love relationships increases. This person attempts to self-disclose to a wider group of people, and is better able to manage the stigma related to his/her lifestyle.



PUBERTY

When children reach age 10 they are already on the verge of becoming adolescents. **Tween boys and girls** (pre-adolescents ages 9-12) will experience significant changes as puberty hits. Physical, emotional, and social changes are all part of **puberty** which makes this developmental time fun, confusing, and even risky. So the more informed you are the better prepared you will be.

PHYSIOLOGY

Some of the most important sign of puberty are:

- The growth of facial and body hair.
- Body odor changes, with underarm odor becoming more pronounced.
- Menstruation can start for some tween girls.
- Breasts in tween girls start to show, and some engorgement and discomfort can be experienced.
- Tween boys can have a sudden deepening of the voice.

PSYCHOLOGY

- the social unit becomes very important, as peers and friends become their focus.
- Parents may begin to see that tweens start to find them “uncool”.
- Gender characteristics are more evident during this stage, with boys emulating male role models and girls emulating female role models.
- Pop culture becomes important for most tweens, as they become fans of their favorite artists and follow them.

EMOTIONS

- Due to hormonal changes, tween girls can become moody.
- Tween boys can show a preference to be by themselves and become silent and appear distant.

SEXUALITY

- **Sexual Curiosity:** At this age tweens may become more curious about sex. As their sexual hormones develop, children are eager to find out more information about sex and discuss it amongst themselves.
- **Sexual Arousal:** The development of sex hormones can also cause children to get more easily aroused—sometimes even involuntarily.

WHAT TWEENS NEED TO KNOW

It is important that tweens seek the right information regarding puberty and sex. Peers may be eager to talk about the topic but they may not have accurate information to share. Thus, talking to trusted adults about sex is a better source of information. Tweens may feel awkward approaching their parents with sex questions, but they may be the best resource.

Additionally, hygiene is increasingly important for tweens. At this age, deodorant use should be part of the daily routine for tween boys and girls. Specifically for tween girls, the use of sanitary pads and bras is important to master.



COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR LITTLES

Much as adults, children play different “roles” depending on whom they are interacting with and the level of trust they feel with that person. These roles are a way of protecting themselves – not showing too much too soon for fear of being vulnerable to the other person.

The Silent Child -The child who rarely talks, except in one or two word sentences. Until they are certain that you are sincere about being a friend, **your Little may be:**

- Taking some time to get to know you and how you react in certain situations.
- Sizing you up to see what you are all about.

Your Little may assume an inactive role, which could be mistakenly construed as disinterest or boredom. His/her behavior has nothing to do with you personally. **Remember to:**

- Be patient and give plenty of opportunities for your Little to give his/her opinion.
- Don't push the issue of getting your Little to talk. You may be the only quiet time the child has outside of a hectic home environment.
- Use interactive activities (such as board games) to take the pressure off of the child to make conversation. Conversation comes more naturally when you are having fun.
- Follow through on scheduled meetings unless there is an emergency. This child is expecting you to let him/her down like other adults have. If you know you won't be able to make a scheduled meeting, let the child know why and you will miss seeing him/her. Schedule your next meeting together ASAP.
- Ask questions about his/her week, how school went, family, etc...

The “Love You to Death” Child - The child who will try to call you all of the time, hang on you, seem to want your attention constantly and may use negative behavior to get your attention as negative attention is better than none at all.

- May be starved for attention and need the one-to-one time that you can provide.
- Boundaries have never been taught so they do not know what normal behavior is.

It is very important that you set boundaries with this child as soon as you perceive the attention seeking behavior is becoming a problem. **For example:**

- Pick one day per week and a specific time frame that the child may call you.
- Explain that hanging on you or hugging excessively is not acceptable behavior but sitting next to one another or an occasional hug is acceptable.
- For the very clingy child, you may need to ration your hugs (one at the start of the outing and one at the end) or have your Little ask if it's okay to give you a hug.
- Give the child praise when he/she behaves within the boundaries you have set.

The “Give Me” Child - The child who expects that adults will buy things to express their love or caring. Do not feel that you must spend money on your Little in order to have fun or that you must make up for all that he/she is without at home. **Following are some guidelines:**

- Don't start off your match relationship by bringing the child a gift. The child will anticipate and expect all match meetings to be this way.
- Use your first meeting together to start building a healthy friendship by exploring one another's



interest/hobbies, what qualities you look for in a friend, and what friendship means to you.

- Educate your Little about how much money it costs to buy things and how many hours you have to work to purchase a specific item. Often times, children simply have no concept of money and that you have to work to get it.
- Don't be surprised if your Little doesn't get it right away as he/she may witness their parent's poor money management. However, stick firm to your rules.

The "I Don't Care" Child - In response to the question, "What would you like to do?" this child's reply is often "I don't know" or "whatever you want." This child is probably lacking in self-confidence to suggest match activities.

Responses like this often leave the Big Brother/Big Sister wondering if the child really wants to share time with him/her due to the child's lack of enthusiasm. **Make sure to:**

- Take responsibility for planning activities and calling your Little.
- Choose two activity options and help your Little to choose one.
- Sit down together with the Little and brainstorm different match activity ideas and make a list.

The "I Won't Show Any Feeling" Child - Of course, this child does have feelings but is reluctant to show that he/she really cares whether he/she spends time with you or not.

- May have been let down by adults who made promises and didn't keep them.
- Denies his/her feelings as a defense mechanism to prevent disappointment.

Be patient and remember, this child is in the program because he/she has said he/she wants to be. You are just the person who can prove to this child that not all adults break their promises.

- Always follow through with plans with your Little unless an emergency comes up.
- Always call and explain to your Little why you have to cancel plans and express your disappointment at not being able to share time with him/her.
- Be sure to reschedule as soon as possible.
- Check in with your Little and ask "how do you feel about this?" or "how did that make you feel?" when your Little shares a significant piece of information with you about school, friends, peers, family, etc...



BULLYING

What is bullying?

- Bullying is unfair and one-sided. It happens when someone keeps hurting, frightening, threatening, or leaving someone out on purpose.
- Bullying may consist of hitting, teasing, taunting, spreading rumors and gossip, stealing, or excluding someone from a group. It is carried out with the intent to harm someone.
- Bullying is often a repeated activity. However, bullying may also occur as a one-time event. Bullying always involves a power imbalance. The person bullying has more power due to such factors as age, size, strength, support of friends, or access to resources (such as toys and other belongings), and uses this power in a deliberately hurtful way.

Who bullies?

People sometimes assume that only boys bully, but that is not true. Girls also bully others.

- **Boys** tend to use methods such as hitting, fighting, and threatening. These face-to-face behaviors are easy to observe.
- **Girls** tend to bully using physical and verbal attacks, but they often use behind-the-back methods that are harder to see. These more subtle behaviors include getting peers to exclude others and spreading rumors and gossip.
- It's important to remember, though, that girls *and* boys use both face-to-face and behind-the-back bullying methods.

What are the consequences of bullying?

The serious consequences of bullying go beyond those that result from violations of school disciplinary rules. Bullying jeopardizes children's safety and potentially creates both short- and long-term problems for all children involved. Children who are bullied are more likely to develop future academic problems and psychological difficulties. Serious problems such as depression and low self-esteem can result, and they can continue into adulthood.

Children who bully and continue this behavior as adults have greater difficulty developing and maintaining positive relationships. Research shows that without effective intervention, children who regularly bully others may grow up to become perpetrators of domestic violence, child abuse, hate crimes, sexual abuse, and other illegal behavior. In fact, children with bullying problems at age 8 are six times more likely to be convicted of a crime by age 24 than children who do not have bullying problems.

How many children does bullying really affect?

Bullying affects virtually all children. Although it is true that some children will never be bullied, research shows that children witness 85 percent of school bullying incidents. Child witnesses, or *bystanders*, may feel powerless to stop bullying. They may fear being bullied next. And they may feel sad or guilty about the abuse others experience. Additionally, bystanders may see those who bully succeed at getting what they want. This may tempt bystanders to take part themselves and may lead to an overall increase in bullying. Improving social skills and creating a safe, caring, respectful school environment can help all children deal with bullying.



Isn't bullying just a normal part of growing up?

The many myths about bullying include the notion that bullying is a harmless childhood activity and a normal part of growing up. Confusion about the difference between *conflict* and *bullying* can fuel this myth. While occasional peer conflict is inevitable, bullying is not inevitable. It should always be avoided. In a conflict, both sides have equal power to resolve the problem. But bullying involves the intentional, one-sided use of power to control another. Its harmful consequences can affect people for the rest of their lives.

Wouldn't my Little tell me about being bullied?

Not necessarily. Children may not tell adults—not even their parents—about being bullied at school. Studies show that children don't tell because they believe adults won't help stop the bullying. Children may also think that they should be able to solve their own problems. Or they may not even recognize that they are being bullied. Other children are afraid. They think that telling an adult will result in worse treatment from the child doing the bullying.

Watch your child for the following signs. Any one of them could indicate that he/she is being bullied:

- Fear of riding the school bus
- Cuts or bruises
- Damaged clothing or belongings
- Frequently "lost" lunch money
- Frequent requests to stay home from school
- Frequent unexplained minor illnesses
- Sleeplessness or nightmares
- Depression, or lack of enthusiasm for hobbies or friends
- Declining school performance

What to do if your Little is being bullied?

- ✓ Tell your match support specialist
- ✓ Don't tell them to ignore the bullying
- ✓ Don't blame them for the bullying. Don't assume he/she did something to provoke it.
- ✓ Allow them to talk about his or her bullying experiences.
- ✓ Empathize with them. Tell them that bullying is wrong, it is not their fault, and that you are glad he or she had the courage to tell you about it.
- ✓ Do not encourage physical retaliation.

What to do if your Little Bullies others?

- Tell your match support specialist
- Build on your little's talents by encouraging him or her to get involved in positive activities



CHILDREN AND THE GRIEVING PROCESS

Grief is: A normal and natural reaction to loss

A holistic experience – It affects our entire being: mind, body, spirit and emotion.

A unique experience – not two people will grieve exactly the same

Grief issues of our Littles: The loss of a parent(s) through death, divorce, desertion, incarceration, or placement of child in a foster home

A Child's Expression of Grief:

Lack of Feelings: The child may act like nothing has happened. This is a protective mechanism, nature's way of caring for children.

- Be there and answer questions when the child does engage in the loss.
- Let the child share when he/she is ready. Sometimes engaging in a fun, interactive activity such as coloring relaxes the Little's defenses and he/she will open up.
- Suggest that the child keep a grief journal, write a letter or draw a picture to the absent person to facilitate the Littles's expression of grief.
- Let your Little know you are open to sharing when he/she wants to.

Regressive Behavior: Children may regress by reverting to baby talk, become afraid to be left alone, or not remembering how to tie their shoes. This type of behavior usually occurs immediately after a death and is a way to help them feel safe.

- Plan calm, quiet activities, such as walking, quietly talking and time alone. Let your Little feel nurtured and safe.

Loss & Loneliness: Because the Little has finally realized the loved one is never coming back, he/she exhibits a lack of interest in his/her world, appears depressed and suffers low self-esteem. Feeling depressed is a normal response.

- Assure your Little that he/she is not alone in his/her grief. It's okay to play and have fun without feeling guilty. Plan some fun, carefree activities around lots of people.

Explosive Emotions: The Little outwardly displays anger, blame, hatred, jealousy, resentment and panic attacks. This is a natural way for the Little to protest the painful reality of the loss. Behind the display of emotions are feelings of pain, helplessness, frustration and fear.

- Create ways to help your Little express pent-up emotions such as exercise, play sports, sing, dance, draw, work with clay or keep a journal.

Implosive Emotions: Children who are not given permission to display their emotions by themselves or others turn their grief inward and suffer feelings of guilt, low self-esteem, anxiety and chronic physical complaints.

- Try to be supportive, understanding and encourage outward expression of grief.
- Recognize this Littles's good deeds and accomplishments by giving genuine praise.

Acting Out Behavior: Some typical behaviors may be instigating verbal/physical fights, rebelling against authority figures, or generally being loud and agitated. It is difficult to understand what is causing this behavior. Perhaps the Little is feeling insecure, abandoned, unlovable, and responsible for the loss. This behavior may be the only way the Little knows how to express him/herself and a way to protect him/herself from future loss.

- Acknowledge your Little's grief, talk about appropriate ways to express grief and follow through on planned activities unless there is an emergency. The last thing this child needs is the loss of another person.
- Set limits and consequences. If your Little is not behaving, simply end your visit early.



Tips for Helping Grieving Children

Acknowledge the loss

- This lets your Little know that you care, that it's okay to talk with you and that the loss is real.

Use proper terminology

- Such as "cancer," "death," "divorce," and "desertion." Avoid euphemisms such as "lost," "eternal rest," "left us," "is away visiting," or "went to sleep for a long time."

Listen

- Listening is more important than asking questions and giving advice. Let your Little's questions guide you. Answer with a question until you have a clear understanding of what the child is asking

Create structure

- While experiencing grief, the Little feels a lack of control in his/her life and therefore needs the structure of normal routines, appropriate limit setting, consequences for inappropriate behavior, affection, caring and adult role models.

Be aware and sensitive

- Grief and emotions may resurface around important holidays, birthdays and the anniversary of death, divorce or desertion.

Reassure the child

- Children often times think the way they behaved, looked or thought caused the loss. Assure your little that that the death, divorce, or desertion was not his/her fault.

Be aware of your own feelings

- Your own grief may resurface as a result of working through issues with your Little. You must first take care of yourself so you can then support your Little.



MENTORING CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS

How are children affected?

- Children of prisoners have limited developmental resources.
- They rarely receive critical developmental support.
- Often the child's caregiver is a single and/or elderly female caregiver.
- Emotional difficulties including sadness, withdrawal, fear, anger, and anxiety are common reactions.
- Problems in school performance, attendance and behavior are common.
- Many of the children have endured relationships in which they have experienced abandonment and neglect.
- Children of prisoners may be forced to give up their homes, their sense of safety, and sources of comfort.
- Children with a parent(s) in prison are may not have a safe, stimulating environment.
- Most are without a stable living situation.
- Some children have witnessed forms of violence.

What should I do as the mentor? How do I make the relationship work?

- The quality of the mentoring relationship is the key to improving the Little's quality of life.
- Focus on building a positive relationship.
- Focus on building trust.
- Remember to focus on the positive qualities of the Little, rather than trying to change his/her behaviors.
- Be honest, consistent, and show that you understand it is hard being away from his/her parent.
- Bigs are always welcome to seek support, whether by turning to their Match Support Specialist or other Bigs for help.
- Treat your Little as you would any other child. Show respect.
- Recognize and assure the Little that he/she has potential!